

Performance Goal Handbook

MCPSC

MO Charter Public School Commission

Handbook: Developing and Writing Performance Goals

Missouri Charter Public School Commission

Introduction

Autonomy for accountability–this is the charter public school bargain. Charter schools have the freedom to innovate to help students learn. In exchange, they are held fundamentally accountable (through the threat of closure) for student learning.

The Performance Goals are the aspect of the charter contract where schools have the opportunity to design their own report card. They represent the essence of autonomy: each school defines itself and crafts its own measures for demonstrating success. After some negotiation, the school establishes its goals, and the sponsor agrees to hold them accountable for achievement of the goals.

Performance goals are just one aspect of a comprehensive body of evidence the Missouri Charter Public School Commission (MCPSC) uses to hold schools accountable for their performance. They are also just one of three different accountability tools that use the word, *performance*. Those tools are: Performance Framework, Performance Contract, and Performance Goals. Each serves a particular purpose for the MCPSC and sets performance expectations charter schools must abide by.

The following handbook begins by defining the MCPSC's performance terms and expectations, then focuses on performance goals. It defines the elements and qualities of a performance goal, illustrates the process schools might undergo to develop their goals, and provides examples throughout. It is intended to serve as a guide for charter school board members, school leaders, and any other community members who might play a role in developing school performance goals.

Sec. 1: Defining Performance Terms and Expectations

Performance Framework: The Performance Framework establishes the performance expectations that all charter schools must meet. These are based

on State and Federal statutes, national best practice, and MCPSC policy. The Performance Framework is organized in 5 categories: Academics, Finance, Organizational Performance, Learning Environment, and Governance.

Within each category MCPSC has established discrete performance indicators with associated measures, metrics, evidence, ratings and targets. The “ratings and targets” define MCPSC’s expectations for each performance indicator. For academic indicators, each school receives a rating of “Falls Far Below Standard,” “Does Not Meet Standard,” “Meets Standard,” or “Exceeds Standard.” For all other indicators, each school receives a rating of “Falls Far Below Standard,” “Does Not Meet Standard,” or “Meets Standard,”

In the “Academics” category, there is a section titled, “School-Specific Academic Measures.” This section of the Performance Framework is for any academic measures a school might include as part of its Performance Goals (see definition of “Performance Goals”).

All data associated with the Performance Framework becomes part of the school’s Annual Report produced by the MCPSC for State accountability purposes.

Performance Contract: The Performance Contract is a legally binding document charter schools sign and agree to with their sponsor. In signing the Performance Contract, each school agrees to be held accountable for all the expectations established in the Performance Framework. Included in the Performance Contract are the Performance Goals negotiated and agreed to by the school and its sponsor.

Performance Goals: The Performance Goals are goals that schools set, negotiate, and agree to with their sponsor that are particular to the school, its mission, educational philosophy, unique qualities, student population, community context, and organizational priorities. Performance goals establish evidentiary measures the sponsor will hold schools accountable for as part of its authorizing duties.

The MCPSC asks for at least two (2) academic, two (2) non-academic, and one (1) mission specific. Ideally, a school would have no more than seven

(7) goals total. For performance comparison purposes, they also ask schools to identify three comparative nearby public schools, or “peer schools,” and suggest that schools identify an additional “aspirational peer” within Missouri.

The MCPSC evaluates performance goals using the same scale outlined in the Performance Framework unless otherwise defined by the Performance Goals. Please note, again, that performance goals represent just one aspect of a much larger comprehensive body of evidence, which includes all the data associated with the Performance Framework.

Sec. 2: Elements and Qualities

Before diving into the process of developing performance goals, individuals involved in that process should first understand what constitutes a well-written goal. The basic elements, or building blocks, of a performance goal are as follows: Goal, Measure, Metric, and Target. The essential qualities of a goal should follow the SMAART acronym: Specific, Measurable, Ambitious and Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

Elements (adapted from *Making the Mission Matter* by Margaret Lin)

We’ll start by defining each element and providing two cohesive examples that demonstrate how each element comes together to form a performance goal. (all examples are fictional)

Goal: A clear, measurable, high-level statement of what outcome a school will achieve and who will achieve it.

Example 1: “Students will demonstrate a broad knowledge of art history.”

Example 2: “Students will demonstrate grade-level reading proficiency.”

Measure: A general means of assessing progress toward the goal outcome.

Example 1: “Advanced Placement Art History exam achievement.”

Example 2: “MAP ELA exam achievement.”

Metric: The quantification, calculation method, or formula applied to a given measure.

Example 1: “The percentage of students who score a 3, 4, or 5 on the AP Art History exam.”

Example 2: “The percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on the MAP ELA assessment.”

Target: The specific numerical target reached by a specific population that sets expectations and defines success on a measure within a certain period of time.

Example 1: “Annually, at least 90% of students who have attended the school for at least 3 years will score a 3, 4, or 5 on the AP Art History exam.”

Example 2: “The percentage of students in grade 3 scoring proficient or advanced on the

MAP ELA assessment will increase from 60% to 75% over the course of the 5-year charter term.”

Baseline	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
60%	63%	66%	69%	72%	75%

As the elements come together, the performance goal becomes increasingly specific. Each element builds on the other: the goal has an associated measure, the measure is quantified by a metric, and the metric is achieved at a specific target by a specific group of people. The performance goal must still, however, meet the SMAART test.

Qualities

The SMAART test for a performance goal can be framed as a series of questions.

Specific: Does the goal address a particular outcome accomplished by a particular group? Could the language be understood by someone not involved in the development process?

Measurable: Is the goal measure and metric used valid, reliable, and credible? Could the data be easily obtained?

- “Valid,” meaning: does it appropriately assess the outcome it is intended to assess?
- “Reliable,” meaning: would it provide consistent results when taken repeatedly by a student at a specific point in their development, as well as by other students at the same point in their development?
- “Credible,” meaning: would it hold up under external scrutiny?

Ambitious and Achievable: Does the goal set an ambitious target informed by baseline data and cognizant of the student population, community context, and capacity of the school?

Relevant: Is the goal particular to the school and its mission, educational philosophy, unique qualities, student population, community context, and organizational priorities?

Time-bound: Is the goal achieved by a certain time?

Two additional questions schools might consider for internal purposes include:

1. How can we build in **leading indicators**, defined as measures used to track progress toward achieving a goal?
2. How can we build in **strategies** to achieve the goal?

Let’s apply the SMAART test to the two performance goal examples from the “Elements” section. For each quality, we’ll assess whether the goal meets the test or if more information is needed.

Example 1: “Annually, At least 90% of students who have attended the school for at least 3 years will score a 3, 4, or 5 on the AP Art History exam.”

- **Specific:** The goal addresses a particular outcome (achieving a 3, 4, or 5 on the AP exam), achieved by a particular group (at least 90% of

students who have attended the school for at least 3 years). The language is clear, concise, and jargon free. **Meets**

- **Measurable**: The AP Art History exam is a nationally-developed and administered exam, and achieving a 3 or above demonstrates proficiency. Results are typically released 2 months after the test has been administered (usually in July).¹ **Meets**
- **Ambitious and Achievable**: No context is provided, so we cannot evaluate these qualities. Further information on baseline data, student population, community context, and school capacity is needed. **More information needed**
- **Relevant**: No context is provided, so we cannot evaluate this quality. Further information on the school's mission, educational philosophy, unique qualities, student population, community context, and organizational priorities is needed. **More information needed**
- **Time-bound**: The goal will be achieved annually. **Meets**
- **Leading Indicators**: None are specified. **More information needed**
- **Strategies**: None are specified. **More information needed**

Example 2: “The percentage of students in grade 3 scoring proficient or advanced on the MAP ELA assessment will increase from 60% to 75% over the course of the 5-year charter term.”

Baseline	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
60%	63%	66%	69%	72%	75%

- **Specific**: The goal addresses a particular outcome (scoring proficient or advanced on the MAP ELA assessment) and it will be achieved by a particular group (75% of students in grade 3). The language is clear, concise, and jargon free. **Meets**
- **Measurable**: The MAP test, or Missouri Assessment Program, is administered statewide by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and results are released by the State. **Meets**
- **Ambitious and Achievable**: The goal language is divorced from context, so we cannot evaluate these qualities. Further information on baseline data,

¹ <https://apstudents.collegeboard.org/dates/ap-score-release-0>

student population, community context, and school capacity is needed.

More information needed

- **Relevant:** The goal language is divorced from context, so we cannot evaluate this quality. Further information on the school's mission, educational philosophy, unique qualities, student population, community context, and organizational priorities is needed. **More information needed**
- **Time-bound:** The goal will be achieved by the 5th year of the charter term. As a year-by-year goal, it includes a breakdown of targets met each year of the term. **Meets**
- **Leading Indicators:** None are specified. **More information needed**
- **Strategies:** None are specified. **More information needed**

When schools list their performance goals, they are typically presented without context because that is established elsewhere in application and renewal materials. Lacking school-specific context, the example goals discussed here meet some (Specific, Measurable, Time-bound) but not all of the SMAART test requirements (Ambitious and Achievable, Relevant), and neither goal provides information on leading indicators or strategies for achievement. In order to establish context, we now turn our attention to the process schools might undergo to establish their performance goals.

Sec. 3: Process

Gathering Baseline Data to Establish Context

As part of their autonomy, each charter school will have its own process for developing performance goals. Goals should be written at the end of an extensive thinking and planning process. This process will look different for new schools, as opposed to schools seeking renewal, but it begins in the same place: gathering baseline data.

Baseline data is any-and-all data amassed to answer two questions: who are we as a school, and what is the current state of affairs at our school? Data sources can be quantitative, like student performance on standardized assessments, or they can be qualitative, like a graduate profile. Schools might consider organizing potential data sources in six (6) categories: Mission,

Educational Philosophy, Unique Qualities, Student Population, Community Context, and Organizational Priorities. The following defines where data sources for each category might be found, suggests 2-3 guiding questions for school leaders and board members to consider, and suggests an additional “Next Step” question to encourage analysis geared toward goal development.

Mission: Found in mission and vision statements, values statements, core strategic pillars.

1. What is our purpose?
 2. If we achieve our purpose, what will the school look like in 5 years? In 10?
 3. What is our theory and definition of success?
- Next Step: What aspects of our mission are essential for sponsor accountability purposes?

Educational Philosophy: Found in the charter application, curriculum, methods of instruction, student or graduate profiles, school-specific content and performance standards.

1. How do we educate students?
 - a. What do we expect them to know content-wise?
 - b. What do we expect them to be able to do performance-wise?
 2. What should our graduates permanently possess as a result of their experience in our school?
- Next Step: What aspects of our educational philosophy: Are unique to our school? Go above and beyond state or sponsor expectations? Are not assessed by the Performance Framework?

Unique Qualities: Found in key marketing elements of the school, comparisons to other available public (and/or private) educational options.

1. How do we advertise our school to potential families?
 2. What do we offer that other schools don't?
- Next Step: How could we build accountability measures around our unique qualities?

Student Population: Found in student demographics, student performance data, comparisons to other school types.

1. Who attends our school?
2. How do we measure their engagement and performance?

→ Next Step: How will we know whether or not our students are succeeding?

Community Context: Found in school culture and climate, staff and leadership demographics, family engagement, community partnerships, local community demographics, social determinants of health research, community demand measures.

1. Who are we trying to serve, and how are we trying to serve them?
2. What are the assets and barriers to educational attainment for the community we serve?

→ Next Step: How does community context shape school performance?

Organizational Priorities: Found in annual reports, school quality reviews, governance profiles, self-assessments, exemplars, evaluations of school resources and capacity.

1. What are our strengths as an organization? Where do we need to improve?
2. What other schools, charter networks, or best practices might we look to for inspiration?
3. How are we resourced, and what is our capacity to use available resources?

→ Next Step: What is our capacity to use resources effectively and generate performance results?

Baseline data establishes the context that informs performance goals. Once it has been gathered, schools should consider the “Next Step” questions and begin analyzing the information collected. Schools can begin to develop their goals by answering questions like, “Where do we want to go, how will we get there, and how will we know we’ve succeeded?” When those goals are established, schools should add the refining elements—measure, metric, and target.

Revisiting the Examples

Let’s return to the two examples previously discussed to illustrate how baseline data establishes context, and how schools might begin to distinguish between performance goals for sponsor accountability and internal goals for

board accountability. We'll focus on the SMAART test areas that were deemed, "More information needed." Example 1 will demonstrate how collecting baseline data can provide the context needed to satisfy SMAART and provide leading indicators and strategies for achievement. Example 2 will demonstrate the effects of deficient baseline data.

Example 1: "Annually, At least 90% of students who have attended the school for at least 3 years will score a 3, 4, or 5 on the AP Art History exam."

- Ambitious and Achievable: No context provided. **More information needed**
- Relevant: No context provided. **More information needed**
- Leading Indicators: None are specified. **More information needed**
- Strategies: None are specified. **More information needed**

Baseline data: This example comes from a fictional high school whose mission and educational philosophy center around infusing fine arts into all aspects of the curriculum. Art history is taught as part of the school's social studies curriculum, and they require all students to take the AP Art History Exam in their 3rd or 4th year of enrollment. Last year, 80% of students scored a 3, 4, or 5 on the AP exam. This year, the school has started a new community partnership with the local art museum, which has a program that offers monthly college-level art history tutorials.

- Ambitious and Achievable: The 90% target seems ambitious (a 10% increase from the previous year), and the partnership with the local art museum indicates the school might have the capacity to achieve this target. **Meets**
- Relevant: This school is an arts-focused school, it includes art history in its social studies curriculum, and it requires all students take the AP Art History Exam in their 3rd or 4th year of enrollment. **Meets**
- Leading Indicators: Given that art history is offered as part of the social studies curriculum at each grade level, the school could track student performance on art history exams as a leading indicator of achievement on the AP exam. **Meets**
- Strategies: The school has an art history curriculum and community partnership with the local art museum that might help them achieve their goal. **Meets**

In this instance, the sponsor would hold the school accountable only for the target outcome established in the performance goal (90% scoring a 3, 4, or 5). The leading indicators established would become internal accountability goals

for which the board will hold school management accountable to track progress toward achieving the performance goal. Internal board accountability goals could also be established around the strategies employed.

Example 2: “The percentage of students in grade 3 scoring proficient or advanced on the MAP ELA assessment will increase from 60% to 75% over the course of the 5-year charter term.”

Baseline	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
60%	63%	66%	69%	72%	75%

- Ambitious and Achievable: No context provided. **More information needed**
- Relevant: No context provided. **More information needed**
- Leading Indicators: None are specified. **More information needed**
- Strategies: None are specified. **More information needed**

Baseline Data: This example comes from a fictional K-8 charter school applying for renewal that operates in a district where, on average, 50% of students in grade 3 score proficient or advanced on the MAP ELA assessment. In their first charter term, the school increased grade 3 proficient or advanced scores on the MAP ELA assessment from 55% in year one, to 63% in year five, an 8% total increase.

- Ambitious and Achievable: The previous charter term saw an 8% increase in proficient and advanced scores. The performance goal target expects a 12% increase over the next 5-year charter term. This target is ambitious. Whether the school has the capacity to meet the target is unclear, beyond an assumption of continued growth. **Partially meets**
- Relevant: The school has set a target that goes above and beyond the expectation set in the Performance Framework for comparison to the local district. **Meets**
- Leading Indicators: MAP is first taken in grade 3 in Missouri, so progress toward the performance target will need to be monitored at the lower grades, K-2, and throughout the school year for grade 3 students. However, the baseline data does not indicate how the school might track progress. **Does not meet**
- Strategies: None are specified. The goal assumes growth. **Does not meet**

In this example, even though some baseline data has been gathered, that data still provides insufficient context. The sponsor will hold the school accountable for the target outcome established in the performance goal, but the board might find it difficult to track progress toward achieving the goal, and the school might lack capacity to achieve it.

Sec. 4: Bringing it Together–Goal Development

We’ve defined performance terms; discussed the elements and qualities of a well-written performance goal; detailed the process for developing performance goals; and looked at how elements, qualities, and process combine in two example performance goals. How can we bring it all together?

Goal development starts with a process centered around collecting baseline data. Potential data sources can be organized in six categories: Mission, Educational Philosophy, Unique Qualities, Student Population, Community Context, and Organizational Priorities. Analyzing baseline data and reflecting on some of the “Next Steps” questions can help schools generate high-level goals that state a particular outcome to be accomplished by a particular group. Each goal can then be refined, specified, and made quantifiable with associated measures, metrics, and targets. Finally, goals can be evaluated according to the SMAART test—Specific, Measurable, Ambitious and Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound—with built-in leading indicators to track progress and strategies for goal achievement.

Once schools have developed individual goals, they should consider which goals to include in their Performance Goals, and which might serve as internal board-accountability goals. Remember, Performance Goals establish evidentiary measures the MCPSC will use to hold schools accountable at the state level. Schools can and should set additional goals for internal purposes; the board will use these goals to hold management accountable. When considering what to include in their Performance Goals, school leaders and board members should ask themselves: do we feel reasonably confident in our ability to meet the expectations established, and are we willing to be held accountable for this goal at the state level?

Finally, the board and school leaders must discuss school capacity to achieve their goals. Charter school boards govern school capacity and determine how resources will be allocated. Capacity factors to consider include financial and human capital, physical plant, decision-making infrastructure, and more. School leaders and board members must ask themselves: Do we have sufficient capacity to meet our performance expectations, and, if not, how can we improve capacity or adjust expectations?

Appendix

The appendix could include additional examples with Baseline Data (more succinctly summarized), Goal/Measure/Metric/Target, and SMAART Test. See an example below:

Example 1

Baseline data: This example comes from a fictional high school whose mission and educational philosophy center around infusing fine arts into all aspects of the curriculum. Art history is taught as part of the school's social studies curriculum, and they require all students to take the AP Art History Exam in their 3rd or 4th year of enrollment. Last year, 80% of students scored a 3, 4, or 5 on the AP exam. This year, the school has started a new community partnership with the local art museum, which has a program that offers monthly college-level art history tutorials.

Goal: "Students will demonstrate a broad knowledge of art history."

Measure: "Advanced Placement Art History exam achievement."

Metric: "The percentage of students who achieve a 3, 4, or 5 on the AP Art History exam."

Target: "Annually, at least 90% of students who have attended the school for at least 3 years will score a 3, 4, or 5 on the AP Art History exam."

- *Specific:* The goal addresses a particular outcome (achieving a 3, 4, or 5 on the AP exam), achieved by a particular group (at least 90% of students who have attended the school for at least 3 years). The language is clear, concise, and jargon free.

- Measurable: The AP Art History exam is a nationally-developed and administered exam, and achieving a 3 or above demonstrates proficiency. Results are typically released 2 months after the test has been administered (usually in July).
- Ambitious and Achievable: The 90% target seems ambitious (a 10% increase from the previous year), and the partnership with the local art museum indicates the school might have the capacity to achieve this target.
- Relevant: This school is an arts-focused school, it includes art history in its social studies curriculum, and it requires all students take the AP Art History Exam in their 3rd or 4th year of enrollment.
- Time-bound: The goal will be achieved annually.
- Leading Indicators: Given that art history is offered as part of the social studies curriculum at each grade level, the school could track student performance on art history exams as a leading indicator of achievement on the AP exam.
- Strategies: The school has an art history curriculum and community partnership with the local art museum that might help them achieve their goal.